

MCM Company works with ACC to provide employees with flexible remote access and protect valuable data.



Balancing Accessibility with Security

The ubiquity of Internet connectivity, and the low cost of mobile computing hardware are driving many organizations to provide employees with the ability to work from anywhere. When this remote access capability is mission critical, it must be secure, reliable and user friendly.

MCM Company, Inc. is a construction management firm that provides professional project and construction management services for some of Cleveland's most high profile projects.

In the construction industry, compliance to a schedule can make or break a project. From meeting bid deadlines to final inspection, tasks have to be completed on time and on budget for a project to be successful. To maintain a competitive advantage, MCM Company employees need access to as much information as possible as soon as possible. This information allows them to react quickly to changes and keep projects on schedule. Remote access capability from job site to the home office gives MCM Company the information they need to meet project deadlines.

MCM Company's initial remote access solution was simple and low cost. Unfortunately, performance of mission critical applications was unacceptable, and data backup/protection was effectively non-existent. Employees were unable to access the information they needed in a timely manner and there was a serious risk of data loss due to hardware failure or equipment theft.

At the main office, there was concern about their data backup mechanisms, and the ability to recover in the event of hardware failure or disaster. MCM Company's staff realized that mission critical applications and data were not properly protected from failure.

Identify the Business Need

MCM Company, Inc. needed reliable and secure remote access. They also wanted to address their main office user's needs, and protect their mission critical data from failure, theft, or disaster.

The ideal solution would be a multilayered approach to accessibility and data protection. System hardware would have to provide redundancy to protect from data loss due to hardware failure, and mission critical data should be protected by a backup system that requires minimal user intervention and maintenance. The remote access solution should be secure, user friendly, and reliable.

Identify the Existing Resources

After defining MCM Company's needs, Achieve Computer Consulting performed a thorough analysis and inventory of the current operating environment to determine what resources were available. The client's concerns about data protection and remote access capabilities were confirmed, and underutilized software and hardware were identified.

Prioritizing the Needs

Achieve Computer Consulting used a layered approach to address each of MCM Company's needs. Mitigating risks to data loss was made a priority before a viable remote access solution could be implemented.

Best of breed hardware and software were chosen, with emphasis on leveraging existing investments.

Data is the Business

To protect valuable data, HP servers were installed and configured with redundant options. The existing Microsoft Windows Small Business Server 2003 installation and license was migrated to the new hardware.

With a stable infrastructure in place, Achieve Computer Consulting assisted MCM Company, Inc. with consolidating data and mission critical applications on their new hardware. Many of the immediate risks of data loss were partially mitigated by moving Microsoft SQL Server based applications, shared files, and e-mail to this more robust hardware.

To round out the data protection solution, Symantec Backup Exec for Windows Small Business Server was selected as a data backup management software. Backup Exec was configured to perform routine backups to an existing unused DLT drive. This

combination provided MCM Company, Inc. with a low maintenance backup solution to protect all of their valuable data, and made maximum use of existing hardware.

Flexible Secure Remote Access

MCM Company's remote users required access to core business applications on a daily basis. These users may not return to the main office for many days in a row, and they utilized laptops, cellular broadband, wired broadband, and public Wi-Fi for connectivity. An existing remote access VPN capability was in place, however application performance was unacceptable. Additionally, most laptops were not being backed up on a routine basis which could result in data loss due to theft or hardware failure.

Achieve Computer Consulting worked with MCM Company, Inc. to inventory mission critical applications and data. Application vendors were interviewed to obtain minimum system requirements and compatibility information for their products. Armed with this information, a Microsoft Windows Terminal Services solution utilizing the existing VPN capabilities was proposed.

MCM Company, Inc. was utilizing a 3rd party hosted e-mail service. This service did not provide rich collaboration capabilities. Achieve Computer Consulting recommended migrating email services in house in order to leverage their existing investment in Microsoft Exchange Server as part of their Small Business Server license. The addition of Blackberry Professional Software allowed their Blackberry users real-time email, calendar, and contact

information to further enable employees to collaborate. An added advantage was that the cost of the minimally featured hosted email service would no longer be incurred each month.

The Bottom Line

Working with Achieve Computer Consulting, MCM Company, Inc. was able to provide their mobile workforce with secure connectivity to mission critical applications from anywhere with Internet access. Their infrastructure was effectively protected data from loss, and employees were empowered with the tools to succeed.

To Learn More

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